Hints For Narrowing Your Next Web Search

First the good news. Finding information on the World Wide Web is now easier and more powerful than ever, thanks to search sites like *Yahoo!*, *Alta Vista*, *Lyco*s, and *Excite*.

Unfortunately, finding information on the Web that you do NOT want also got a lot easier.

As the Web continues its rapid growth in popularity, so does the clutter. Nowadays, a simple key-word search on a site like *Alta Vista* can point to well over one million sites, arranged in a massive list that can literally take hours to sort through. To avoid this fate, try narrowing your next search with the following hints.▲

Use capital letters for proper nouns, such as names like *Neighborhood Networks* and places like *White House*.

Be specific by using at least two or more search terms, but always exclude words like *the, a, and* from your search string. Consider the example (*right*) using *Yahoo!*:

Search Term(s)	Number of site matches
computer	21,340
computer center	1,251
computer learning center	65
"computer learning center"	18

Use quotations around a word or phrase when you want an exact match. For example, a search by the word *consult* would return Web pages that include the word *consult* as well as the words *consultant*, *consulting*, *consultation*, etc. However, if you put quotations around *"consult"*, only pages with that word in it would be returned.

 Use a + sign in front of words that must appear in result documents. For instance, a search for *+welfare +reform* would return Web pages where the words *welfare* <u>and</u> *reform* both appeared somewhere in the text.

Use a - sign in front of words that must NOT appear in result documents. Let us say that you are looking for job opportunities that are non-technical in nature. To avoid having to sort through the great number of computer-related job announcements on the Web, you could narrow your search by using the following search string:
employment -computer -network

▲ Advanced search techniques among different Web search sites do vary. Please consult the "help" section of the individual search site that you are using.